

The logo consists of two large, stylized 'R' characters in a dark grey font. A small red circle containing a white ampersand is positioned between the two 'R's. The logo is set against a light grey background with a subtle gradient.

REASON & REVELATION

A Monthly Journal of Christian Evidences

NOVEMBER 2015 • VOL. 35 • NO. 11

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES AND THE WORSHIP OF JESUS

Homo Naledi
—Kind of Shady

AP Gift Suggestions



Jehovah's Witnesses and the Worship of Jesus

Eric Lyons, M.Min.

Article In Brief... 

If God alone is worthy of worship, and if Jesus—the sinless Savior—ever willingly accepted worship, then Jesus is divine. Jehovah's Witnesses contend that Jesus never actually accepted worship. In truth, however, both the Scriptures and Jehovah's Witnesses' early writings testify to the serious error they now espouse.

ACCORDING to Jehovah's Witnesses, "Jesus is not God," and thus should not be worshiped by Christians. *The Watchtower*, a magazine published twice a month by Jehovah's Witnesses, has repeatedly made such claims through the years. In their September 15, 2005 issue, for example, they stated quite simply that the Scriptures "show that Jesus is not God Almighty." The Jehovah's Witnesses' official Web site (jw.org), which republishes many items from *The Watchtower*, briefly answers the question "Do Jehovah's Witnesses Believe in Jesus?," concluding, "we do not worship Jesus, as we do not believe that he is Almighty God" (2015). After all, allegedly "in his prehuman existence, Jesus was a **created** spirit being.... Jesus had a beginning and could never be coequal with God in power or eternity" ("What Does the Bible...?," 2000, emp. added). The October 15, 2004 issue of *The Watchtower* concluded a section about Jesus **not** being the true God with these words: "Jehovah, and no one else, is 'the true God and life

everlasting.' He alone is worthy to receive exclusive worship from those whom he created.—Revelation 4:11" (p. 31). Since God alone is worthy of worship, and since Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus is only an angel and not God (see "The Truth About Angels," 1995), He allegedly should not be worshiped.

GOD ALONE IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP

THERE is no argument over the fact that God alone is worthy of worship. Jehovah revealed His will to Moses on Mt. Sinai, saying, "You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:3-5). Regarding the Gentiles who were sent to live in Samaria after the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the Bible says:

To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear

the Lord, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the Lord had commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel, with whom the Lord had made a covenant and charged them, saying: "You shall not fear other gods, nor bow down to them nor serve them nor sacrifice to them; but the Lord, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm, **Him you shall fear, Him you shall worship, and to Him you shall offer sacrifice**" (2 Kings 17:34-36, emp. added).

The Bible reveals time and again that God alone is to be worshiped. Luke recorded that King Herod was eaten with worms because, instead of glorifying God Almighty, he allowed the people to glorify him as a god (Acts 12:21-23). Herod's arrogant spirit stands in direct contrast to the reaction that Paul and Barnabas had when the citizens of Lystra attempted to worship them (Acts 14:8-18). After Paul healed a man who had been crippled from his birth, the people of Lystra shouted: "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men." They even called Paul and Barnabas by the names of their gods (Hermes and Zeus), and sought to worship them with sacrifice. Had these two preachers had the same arrogant spirit as Herod, they would have accepted worship, and felt as if they deserved such honor. Instead, these Christian men "tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you'" (Acts 14:15). Paul recognized that it is unlawful for humans to worship other humans, and thus sought to turn the people's attention toward God, and away from himself.

The Bible also reveals that man must refrain from worshipping angels. When the apostle John fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who had revealed to him the message of Revelation, the angel responded, saying, "See that you **do not do that**. For I am your fellow servant, and of your

brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. **Worship God**” (Revelation 22:9, emp. added; cf. 19:10). Angels, idols, and humans are all unworthy of the reverent worship that is due only to God. As Jesus reminded Satan: “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him **only** you shall serve’” (Matthew 4:10, emp. added).

JESUS ACCEPTED WORSHIP

THE dilemma in which Jehovah’s Witnesses find themselves is that they believe Jesus was a good man and prophet, yet unlike good men and good angels who have always rejected worship from humanity, Jesus accepted worship. If worship is to be reserved only for God, and Jesus, the One “who knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22), accepted worship, then the logical conclusion is that Jesus believed that He was deity. Numerous times the Bible mentions that Jesus accepted worship from mankind. Matthew 14:33 indicates that those who saw Jesus walk on water “worshiped Him.” John 9:38 reveals that the blind man whom Jesus had healed, later confessed his belief in Jesus as the Son of God and “worshiped him.” After Mary Magdalene and the other women visited the empty tomb of Jesus, and the risen Christ appeared to them, “they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him” (Matthew 28:9). When Thomas first witnessed the resurrected Christ, he exclaimed, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). Later, when Jesus appeared to the apostles in Galilee, “they worshiped Him” on a mountain (Matthew 28:17). A few days after that, his disciples “worshiped Him” in Bethany (Luke 24:52). Time and time again Jesus accepted the kind of praise from men that is due only to God. He never sought to correct His followers and redirect the worship away from Himself as did the angel in Revelation or the apostle Paul in Acts 14. Nor did God strike Jesus with deadly worms for not redirecting the praise He received from men as He did Herod, who, when being hailed as a god, “did not give praise to God” (Acts 12:23).

Sadly, Jehovah’s Witnesses have attempted to circumvent the obvious references to Jesus accepting worship by changing the word “worship” in their *New World Translation* to “obeisance” every time the Greek word *proskuneo* (the most prominent word for worship in the New Testament) is used in reference to Jesus. Over 30 times in the *New World Translation* (first published by the Jehovah’s Witnesses Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in 1950) *proskuneo* is correctly translated “worship” when God the Father is the recipient of glory and praise. This Greek word occurs 14 times in the New Testament in reference to Jesus, yet **not once** do more recent editions of the *New World Translation* render it “worship;” instead, every time it is translated “obeisance.” Allegedly, Mary Magdalene, the apostles, the blind man whom Jesus healed, etc., never worshiped Jesus; rather, they only paid “obeisance” to Him.

In 21st-century English, people generally make a distinction between the verbs “worship” and “do obeisance.” Most individuals, especially monotheists, use the word worship in a positive sense when talking about God, whereas “obeisance” is used more often in reference to the general respect given to **people** held in high regard. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the*

English Language defines “obeisance” as “1. A gesture or movement of the body, such as a curtsy, that expresses deference or homage. 2. An attitude of deference or homage,” whereas the verb “worship” is defined as “1. To honor and love **as a deity**. 2. To regard with ardent or adoring esteem or devotion” (2000, emp. added). The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society agrees with the distinction often made between these words in modern English: God should be “worshiped,” while Jesus (we are told) should only receive “obeisance” (i.e., the respect and submission one pays to important dignitaries and superiors).

The Greek word *proskuneo*, which appears in the New Testament 60 times, literally means “to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence” (Thayer, 1962, p. 548; see also Mounce, 1993, p. 398). According to Greek scholars Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker, this word was used in ancient times “to designate the custom of prostrating oneself before a person and kissing his feet, the hem of his garment, the ground, etc.; the Persians did this in the presence of their deified king, and the Greeks before a divinity or something holy” (1979, p. 723). Admittedly, the word “obeisance” could be used on occasions to translate *proskuneo*. The problem is that Jehovah’s Witnesses

Reason & Revelation is published monthly by Apologetics Press, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Montgomery, AL. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to **Reason & Revelation**, 230 Landmark Dr., Montgomery, AL 36117; **ISSN:** [1542-0922] **USPS#** 023415.

Apologetics Press is a non-profit, tax-exempt work dedicated to the defense of New Testament Christianity. Copyright © 2015. All rights reserved.

Editor:

Dave Miller, M.A., M.Div., M.A.R., Ph.D.*
(*Communication, Southern Illinois University)

Associate Editor:

Jeff Miller, M.S., Ph.D.*
(*Biomechanical Engineering, Auburn University)

Annual Subscription Rates:

\$12.00	Domestic
\$10.00	Domestic Bulk (5+ to same address)
\$12.00	Canada & Overseas (plus shipping)

General inquiries, changes of address, or international callers:

Phone: (334) 272-8558
Fax: (334) 270-2002

Orders:

Phone: (800) 234-8558
Fax: (800) 234-2882

On-line Web store/catalog, subscription order/renewal form, current issues, archives, and other information (all orders processed on a secure server):

URL: www.ApologeticsPress.org
URL: espanol.ApologeticsPress.org/espanol
E-mail: mail@ApologeticsPress.org

Discovery—Scripture & Science for Kids is a sister publication for children. For more information, please contact our offices or visit the Discovery Web site at:
URL: www.DiscoveryMagazine.com

make an arbitrary distinction between obeisance and worship when it comes to the token of reverence that Jesus in particular was given. They translate *proskuneo* as “obeisance” **every time** Jesus is the object, yet **never** when God the Father is the recipient of honor and praise.

As with other words in the Bible that have multiple meanings, the context can help determine the writer’s intended meaning. Consider the circumstances surrounding some of the occasions when Jesus is mentioned as the object of man’s devotion.

- In John chapter nine, Jesus miraculously healed a man who was “blind from his birth” (vs. 1). When the man upon whom this miracle was performed appeared before various Jews in the synagogue and called Jesus a prophet (vs. 17), he was instructed to “give glory to God,” not Jesus, because allegedly Jesus “is a sinner” (vs. 24). Later, after the man born blind was cast out of the synagogue, Jesus informed him of His **true identity**—that He was **not** just a prophet, but also “the Son of God.” At that moment, the gentleman exclaimed, “Lord, I believe,” and he **worshiped** Him (vs. 38). Although the Greek word *proskuneo* was used in ancient times of paying respect or doing obeisance to people, no such translation is warranted in this passage. In the Gospel of John, this word is found 11 times. **In every instance**, Jehovah’s Witnesses’ *New World Translation* renders it “worship,” **except here** in John 9:38 where it is arbitrarily translated “obeisance.”
- Following a day in which Jesus miraculously fed 5,000 men (not including women and children) with only five loaves of bread and two fish, Matthew recorded how Jesus literally walked on the water in the midst of the Sea of Galilee during a violent storm, saved Peter from drowning, and then walked onto a boat where He was met with those who “worshiped him,

saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God’” (Matthew 14:33). Jesus’ worshipers did not merely pay Him the same respect (or “obeisance”) that one pays a respected ruler, teacher, or master—people incapable of such feats. On the contrary, they recognized that Jesus had overcome the laws of nature, and that His actions warranted praise and adoration—not as a man, but as the “Son of God.” If Jesus was not worthy of such praise, why did He accept it? If Jesus was not to be adored, why did the angel of the Lord not strike Him with the same deadly worms with which he struck Herod (Acts 12:23)?

- After defeating death and rising from the grave, a sign which declared Him to be “the Son of God with power” (Romans 1:4), Jesus accepted worship (*proskuneo*) from Mary Magdalene and the other women who went to visit the tomb of Jesus (Matthew 28:8-9), as well as all of the apostles (Matthew 28:17). Jesus was not the only one ever to be resurrected from the dead, but He was the only resurrected individual the Bible mentions as afterwards receiving praise and adoration (i.e., worship) from man. The widow’s son of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:22), the son of a Shunammite (2 Kings 4:32-35), the daughter of Jairus (Mark 8:21-24, 35-43), the widow of Nain’s son (Luke 7:11-16), Lazarus (John 11:1-45), Tabitha (Acts 9:36-43), and Eutychus (Acts 20:7-12) all were raised from the dead, but none received *proskuneo*. The Bible never reveals any resurrected person other than Jesus who ever received and accepted worship. Jesus’ followers recognized that His resurrection was different. It verified His claims of divinity.
- The disciples worshiped Jesus again at His ascension. After recording that Jesus was “carried up into

heaven,” Luke wrote: “[T]hey worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the Temple praising and blessing God” (Luke 24:52). Notice that the word “worshiped” (*proskuneo*) is used in this passage along with such words as “praising” and “blessing”—words that carry a religious connotation in connection with God. This fact highlights that the use of *proskuneo* in this context is not merely obeisance. Also, notice that the disciples offered worship to an “absent” Savior. It would make no sense to pay obeisance to a respected individual that has departed, but makes perfect sense if, rather, the individual is God and worthy of worship. The disciples did not just bow before some earthly ruler; they **worshiped** their Lord Who had defeated death 40 days earlier, and had just ascended up into heaven before their eyes.

Jesus did not receive *proskuneo* on these occasions because He was a great teacher, or because He was viewed at these moments simply as an earthly king. Rather, all of these instances of worship were surrounded by miraculous events that were done to prove He was Heaven sent, and that “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9). There is every reason to believe that on such occasions as these, Jesus’ disciples meant to pay divine, religious honor to Him, not mere civil respect or regard that earthly rulers often receive.

WAFFLING ON THE WORSHIP OF JESUS

To the church at Philippi the apostle Paul wrote: “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him [Jesus] and given Him the name which is above every name, that **at the name of Jesus every knee should bow**, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11, emp. added). The

reference to the bowing of the knee is an obvious allusion to worship (cf. Isaiah 45:23; Romans 1:4). Such worship, Paul wrote, would not only come from those on Earth, but also from “those in heaven” (Philippians 2:10). This statement harmonizes well with Hebrews 1:6. In a section in which the writer of Hebrews exalted Jesus above the heavenly hosts, he affirmed that even the angels worship Christ. He wrote: “Let all the angels of God worship (*proskuneo*) Him.” The KJV, ASV, NKJV, NASB, ESV, NIV, RSV and a host of other translations render *proskuneo* in this verse as “worship.” How does the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ *New World Translation* render this passage? Unfortunately, as with all other times in the NWT when Jesus is mentioned as being the object of *proskuneo*, the word is translated “do obeisance,” not “worship.” Hebrews 1:6 reads: “Let all God’s angels **do obeisance** to him” (NWT).

Interestingly, however, the NWT has not always rendered *proskuneo* in Hebrews 1:6 as “do obeisance.” When Jehovah’s Witnesses’ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society first printed the NWT in 1950, the verse actually rendered *proskuneo* as “worship” instead of “do obeisance.” Even the revised 1961 edition of the NWT translated *proskuneo* as “worship.” But, by 1971, Jehovah’s Witnesses had changed Hebrews 1:6 to read: “Let all God’s angels **do obeisance** to him.”

The fact is, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society has been very inconsistent in their teachings on whether or not Jesus should be worshiped. In the past few decades Jehovah’s Witnesses’ flagship magazine (November 1964, p. 671) has claimed that “it is unscriptural for worshipers of the living and true God to render worship to the Son of God, Jesus Christ” (as quoted in Rhodes, 2001, p. 26; see also *The Watchtower* 2004, pp. 30-31). But, “from the beginning it was not so.” Notice what Jehovah’s Witnesses used to teach in *The Watchtower* (called *Zion’s Watch Tower* in the early days) regarding whether or not Jesus should be worshiped:

- “The wise men came at His birth to worship Him. (Matt. 2) The leper worshiped Him. They in the ship worshiped Him, as did also the ruler and woman of Canaan. Yet none were ever rebuked for it.... **[T]o worship Christ in any form cannot be wrong**” (Allen, 1880, emp. added).
- “[A]lthough we are nowhere instructed to make petitions to him, it evidently could not be improper to do so; for such a course is nowhere prohibited, **and the disciples worshiped him**” (*Zion’s Watch Tower*, 1892, emp. added).
- “Yes, we believe our Lord Jesus while on earth was really worshiped, and properly so” (*Zion’s Watch Tower*, 1898).
- “[W]hosoever should worship Him must also worship and bow down to Jehovah’s Chief One in that capital organization, namely, Christ Jesus...” (*The Watchtower*, 1945, p. 313).

For more than half a century, Jehovah’s Witnesses taught that it was acceptable to worship Jesus. Now, however, they claim it is unscriptural. Such inconsistency regarding the nature of Christ, which is no small matter, reveals to the honest truth seeker that the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society is an advocate of serious biblical error.

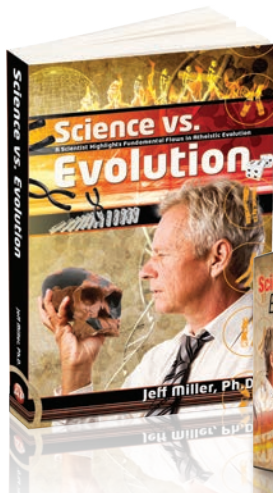
Sadly, Jehovah’s Witnesses not only reject the worship of Jesus because of their belief that He is not deity, they also must deny Him such religious devotion because they teach He actually is an angel. *The Watchtower* has taught such a notion for several years. The November 1, 1995 issue indicated, “The foremost angel, both in power and authority, is the archangel, Jesus Christ, also called Michael” (“The Truth About Angels”). More recently, an article appeared on the Jehovah’s Witnesses official Web site affirming “the Bible indicates that Michael is another name for Jesus Christ, before and after his life on earth.... [I]t is logical to conclude that Michael is none other than Jesus Christ in his

heavenly role” (“Who Is Michael...?”, 2015). Since, according to Revelation 19:10 and 22:8-9, good angels do not accept worship, but rather preach the worship of God, and no other, Jehovah’s Witnesses must reject paying religious praise and devotion to Jesus. But, notice (again) how inconsistent Jehovah’s Witnesses have been. In only the fifth issue of *Zion’s Watch Tower* magazine (originally edited by Charles Taze Russell, the founder of The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society), regular contributing writer J.H. Paton stated about Jesus: “Hence it is said, ‘let all the angels of God worship him’: (that must include Michael, the chief angel, hence **Michael is not the Son of God**)...” (1879, p. 4, emp. added). Thus, at one time Jehovah’s Witnesses’ official publication taught that Jesus **is not** Michael the archangel, and that He **should** be worshiped. In the 21st century, however, Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that Jesus **is** Michael the archangel, and that He **should not** be worshiped. Clear contradictory statements like these found throughout the years in *The Watchtower* should compel current and potential members of this religious group to question their teachings in light of **the** Truth found in God’s Word.

“WORTHY IS THE LAMB”

ONE additional passage to consider regarding the worship of Jesus is Revelation chapters four and five. In chapter four, the scene in this book of signs (cf. 1:1) is the throne room of God. The “Lord God Almighty” is described as sitting on His throne while “the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him” (4:9). Also, “the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ‘You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created’” (4:10-11). In chapter five, the Lamb that was slain is introduced as standing “in the midst of the throne” (5:6). No one argues the fact that this

(cont. on p. 128)



BOOK
\$10.95
DVD
\$12.00



EXPLORER SERIES



CONTACT US AT

www.apologeticspress.org/webstore
or by calling 1-800-234-8558

Explorer Series 1-8

Sets of 13 lessons

\$10.00 ea.

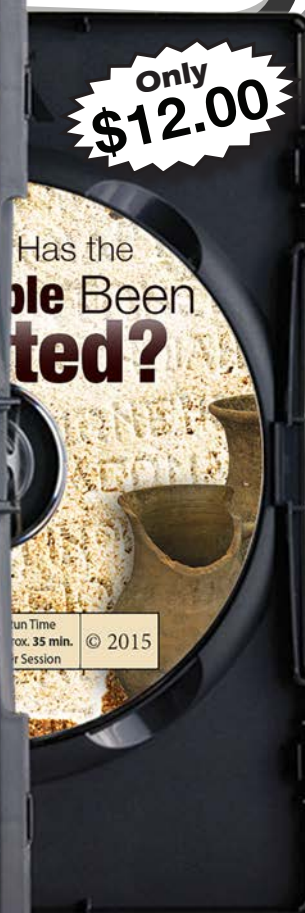
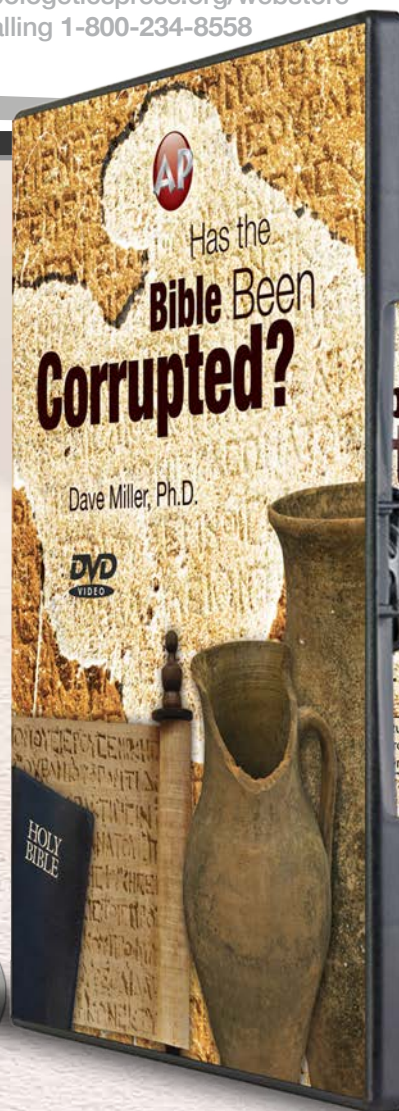


Sexual Anarchy	\$4.95	Refuting Modern Atheism	\$10.95
The Anvil Rings I	\$9.95	Islam DVD	\$12.00
The Anvil Rings II	\$10.95	Surveying the Evidence	\$8.95
Behold! The Lamb of God	\$9.95	The Quran Unveiled	\$10.95
Behold! The Word of God	\$9.95	Always Be Ready	\$8.95

Prices do not include shipping
Taxes apply in Alabama



2 Disk DVD \$12.00
20 or more DVDs \$3.00 ea.



only
\$12.00

2 Disk DVD \$12.00
20 or more DVDs \$3.00 ea.

Lamb is Jesus—the One Whom John the Baptizer twice called “The Lamb of God” (John 1:29,36), and Whom Peter called the “lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). Regarding this Lamb, the apostle John recorded the following in Revelation 5:11-14:

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: **“Worthy is the Lamb** who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, **and to the Lamb**, forever and ever!” Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever (emp. added).

In this chapter, John revealed that **both** God the Father and Jesus are worthy to receive worship from all of creation. In fact, Jesus is given the **same** praise and adoration that the Father is given. Just as God is “worthy...to receive glory and honor and power” (4:11), so Jesus is “worthy...to receive power...and honor and glory...” (5:12). Indeed, “[b]lessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, **and to the Lamb**, forever and ever” (5:13, emp. added). Although Jehovah’s Witnesses use Revelation 4:11 as a proof text for worshiping God the Father (see “What Does God...?” 1996, p. 4), they reject and call unscriptural the worship that Jesus rightly deserves.

CONCLUSION

JESUS once stated during His earthly ministry, “[A]ll should honor the Son **just as** they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him” (John 5:23). Sadly, Jehovah’s Witnesses refuse to honor Jesus in the same way they honor God the Father. While on

Earth, Jesus was honored on several occasions. His followers **worshipped** Him. They even worshiped Him after His ascension into heaven (Luke 24:52). Unlike good men and angels in Bible times who rejected worship, Jesus unhesitatingly received glory, honor, and praise from His creation. Truly, such worship is one of the powerful proofs of the deity of Christ.

REFERENCES

- Allen, L.A. (1880), “A Living Christ,” *Zion’s Watch Tower*, March, https://archive.org/stream/1880ZionsWatchTower/1880_Watch_Tower_djvu.txt.
- American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (2000), (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin), fourth edition.
- Arndt, William, F.W. Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker (1979), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), second edition revised.
- “Do Jehovah’s Witnesses Believe in Jesus?” (2015), <http://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/believe-in-jesus/>.
- Mounce, William D. (1993), *Analytical Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Paton, J.H. (1879), “The Name of Jesus,” *Zion’s Watch Tower*, November, https://archive.org/stream/1879ZionsWatchTower/1879_Watch_Tower_djvu.txt.
- Rhodes, Ron (2001), *The 10 Most Important Things You Can Say to a Jehovah’s Witness* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers).
- Thayer, Joseph (1962 reprint), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- “The Truth About Angels” (1995), *The Watchtower*, November 1.
- The Watchtower*, 1945, October 15.
- The Watchtower*, 2004, October 15.
- The Watchtower*, 2005, September 15.
- “What Does God Require of Us?” (1996), Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of New York.
- “What Does the Bible Say About God and Jesus?” (2000), Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania.
- “Who Is Michael the Archangel?” (2015), <http://www.jw.org/en/publications/books/bible-teach/who-is-michael-the-archangel-jesus/>.
- Zion’s Watch Tower*, 1892, May 15, https://archive.org/stream/1892ZionsWatchTower/1892_Watch_Tower_djvu.txt.
- Zion’s Watch Tower*, 1898, July 15, https://archive.org/stream/1898ZionsWatchTower/1898_Watch_Tower_djvu.txt.

SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Kyle Butt

November 15 Estill Springs, TN (931) 596-2649

Eric Lyons

November 18 Northport, AL (205) 339-6211

Dave Miller

Oct. 29-Nov. 1 Richmond, VA (804) 746-8224

November 6-8 Brighton, CO (303) 887-8860

November 22 Montgomery, AL (334) 264-2985

Jeff Miller

Oct. 31-Nov. 1 Portland, AL (615) 325-2889

November 8 Montgomery, AL (334) 264-2985

November 11 Huntsville, AL (256) 895-8717

November 29 Berry, AL (205) 844-7409

Homo Naledi— *Kind of Shady?*

Jeff Miller, Ph.D.

Credit: Lee Roger Berger research team
(<http://elifesciences.org/content/4/e09560>) [CC BY 4.0], via Wikimedia Commons

Article In Brief...



While the announcement of the latest alleged evidence of human evolution, *Homo naledi*, is still too new to know what will ultimately become of it, it is clear that, as usual, the media and some in the paleoartist and paleoanthropology community are rash in their assessments of the evidence. Conjecture and speculation—rather than evidence and reserve—rule the day.

ON September 10th the media began highlighting the latest fossil find which is argued, once again, to be representative of an ancient ancestor of humans—*Homo naledi*. We are wary about how we respond to brand new discoveries, since always the “jury is still out” when these stories are first splashed in the media and portrayed as conclusive proof of various claims. We have documented their rashness time and again (e.g., Miller, 2015a; Miller, 2015b; Miller, 2015c), and this story is no exception. *Fox News* highlighted South African deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa’s statement that “history books will have to be rewritten” based on this discovery (Tilsley, 2015), a statement very reminiscent of how the media viewed the *Homo floresiensis* fossils when they were discovered in 2004. In 2014 a new study suggested that the fossils were merely modern humans with Down Syndrome (Miller, 2015b). In keeping with previous trends among naturalists and the media, it seems

likely that this newest discovery will again, in the long run, prove not to be what the media is currently claiming it to be, once further study has been done on the fossils—as was the case with *Homo floresiensis*, *Australopithecus sediba* (Miller, 2015c), and the Big Bang inflation debacle last year (Miller, 2015a). With these facts in mind, here are some of the details we can gather at this initial stage.

Lee Berger is the evolutionary paleoanthropologist of the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa who has been in the media a lot the past few years due to the discovery of the *Australopithecus sediba* fossils (Miller, 2012a; Miller, 2012b; Miller, 2015c). Once again, his team has been at the heart of the newest discovery. Though the find is only now being broadcast, the discovery took place in 2013 and was kept secret for two years. They discovered ancient bones and teeth in a cave system in Africa that now number over 1,500 in specimens—an unheard of cache of “human-like” fossils from a

single site (Callaway, 2015). The bones are thought to be representative of some 15 individuals.

The first thing you will likely notice in many of the articles splashing the find is the paleoartist depiction of what *Homo naledi* is thought to have looked like (e.g., Shreeve, 2015; Barras, 2015; Watson, 2015). This portrait should immediately cause skepticism, since mere bones do not tell you what a person’s facial expressions, eye color, skin color, facial wrinkles, hair color, or lips would have looked like, even if a complete skull had been found. Yet all of these features are brazenly depicted in the *naledi* reconstruction (and even **emphasized** in the case of *National Geographic*’s home Web page the day after running the story, which featured a close-up of *naledi*’s eye region, complete with freckles around the eyes and red blood vessels in the whites of its eyes). When such liberties are taken and brazenly broadcast to the media’s audience as solid science, the effect is powerful. As we reported earlier this year regarding the *sediba* fossils (Miller, 2015c), paleoartists have been extremely influential in shaping the minds of the masses in whether they view evolution as true or false, in spite of the fact that their artistic depictions are typically created based on meager evidence—what *New Scientist* calls “part of a face here” or “a jawbone fragment there” (Barras). *USA Today* described the *naledi* discovery as “1,550-plus **bits** of fossil” (Watson, emp. added). *New Scientist* highlighted Berger’s contention that the *naledi* discovery “has implications for how we interpret the other early human fossil finds.... These fossils generally amount to just a **few fragments** rather than complete skeletons” (Barras, emp. added). As he pointed out after discovering the *sediba* fossils, Berger now adds, “Both *sediba* and *naledi* say you can’t take a mandible [lower jaw], a maxilla [upper jaw] or a collection of teeth and try to predict what the rest of the body looks like” (as quoted in Barras). Based on what happened in the case of the *sediba* fossils, having more than said evidence still does not guarantee correct depictions (Miller,

2015c). Apparently the paleoartists are still not getting the message from leading paleoanthropologists.

There are other curiosities already being highlighted at this early stage of the discovery: the age of the fossils is unclear—anywhere between 200,000 and 2,800,000 years (Tilsley), based on evolutionary dating schemes, and where the fossils fall in that range is significant from an evolutionary perspective. [NOTE: Creationists would argue that those dates correlate to the post-Flood period a few thousand years ago.] *USA Today* quoted Berger's thoughts regarding the fossils:

[T]he bodies may have been deliberately placed in the cave, suggesting that long-ago, human relatives were engaged in ritual disposals of their dead. "It's enormously surprising to see a very primitive member of the genus, something with this small a brain," engaged in activity that was thought to be unique to modern humans (as quoted in Watson).

Fox News quoted Berger saying, "This is a new species of human that deliberately disposed of bodies in this chamber?...Up until now, Berger adds, it was thought that *Homo sapiens* were the first beings to choose to dispose of their dead. 'Now, with *Homo naledi*, we have evidence of the world's first burial site,' he said" (Tilsley).

This claim is, as Berger notes, completely inconsistent with the paleoanthropology community's previous claims about *Homo sapiens*. If Berger is right that the *naledi* buried their dead, and if the fossils are dated by evolutionists to be over a million years old (using their time scales), then paleoanthropologists have been **wrong** in their bold claims about *Homo sapiens*. Previously, the oldest evidence of human burial was dated by evolutionists as 430,000 years ago (Callaway). Since burial of dead bodies is considered a mark of intelligence that distinguishes humans from the animal kingdom, Berger's find could provide tangible evidence that what we would call "humans" (roughly the genus "*Homo*") have always been intelligent, rather than that trait evolving within humans. [NOTE: Creation-

ists argue that there would have been a few thousand "proto-species" (called "kinds" in the Bible—cf. Genesis 7:14), on Noah's Ark with immense genetic capability for creating the diversity we see on the planet today within those kinds, including the diversity we see within *Homo sapiens*. Humans, therefore, would not have necessarily **looked** exactly as we do today, but would have still been humans (just as caucasoid, mongoloid, and negroid physiologies today do not look exactly the same). Legitimate examples of ancient humans are likely representative of the humans flourishing in the centuries immediately following the Flood a few thousand years ago. Dating schemes that expand that time scale to hundreds of thousands or millions of years suffer from flawed assumptions—cf. Houts, 2015; Miller, 2013.]

Another inconsistency in the *naledi* discovery: the jumble of fossils that were found in the shaft, if they all belong to the same species, seem to represent a species with a strange hodgepodge of characteristics that do not seem plausible. The skull seems to have harbored a smaller, ape-like brain, while the lower limbs, feet, and hands that were discovered, according to paleoanthropologists, seem to be more like that of modern humans. *New Scientist* reported,

The species the bones belonged to had a unique mix of characteristics. Look at its pelvis or shoulders, says Berger, and you would think it was an apelike *Australopithecus* which appeared in Africa about 4 million years ago and is thought to be an ancestor of *Homo*. But look at its foot and you could think it belonged to our species.... Its skull, though, makes clear that the brain was less than half the size of ours, and more like that of some species of *Homo* that lived about 2 million years ago. "It doesn't look a lot like us," says Berger (Barras).

Quoting John Hawks, paleoanthropologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, *Nature* reported, "It is a very strange combination of features, some that we've never seen before and some that **we would have never expected to find together**" (Callaway,

emp. added). Of course, the reason for that expectation is justified: the combination of such body components does not make sense. It is very possible that in actuality the bones might not actually **belong** together at all—a contention that was argued by paleoanthropologists against Berger's *sediba* fossils last year (Miller, 2015c). As with *sediba*, they may be merely a jumble of bones from different species. After all, Hawks, who helped coordinate the dig for *naledi*, admitted that "the team took flak for its unorthodox approach. 'There's a lot of the field that really believed we're just a couple of cowboys who don't know how things should be done'" (as quoted in Callaway). Of course, when the strange inconsistencies of this find are added to the previously botched assertions of Berger in the *sediba* find, it provides evidence that the critics may have a point.

Berger argues that "the bodies appear to have been dropped from above down a chute formed by rocks which forms the entrance to the chamber" (Tilsley). Could it, instead, be the case that the bodies of several different people and animals all **fell** down the chute and were trapped there, rather than having been intentionally dropped down the chute? *Science* highlighted that possibility (Gibbons, 2015, p. 1150). Such would explain why there's a hodgepodge of bones from apparently different species. Remains from rodents and an owl were also found (p. 1150). Since the hundreds of bones were found disarticulated (i.e., separated from one another rather than in skeletal frame position), there is no conclusive way to know which bones go with which species—and by implication, no way to know if there are or are not multiple species represented.

No wonder, even at this early stage, paleoanthropologists who are critical of Berger's claims are not hard to find. *USA Today* reported reactions by two of them:

Other scientists find the new trove of fossils tantalizing but don't necessarily agree with Berger and his team on what, exactly, has been found. The fos-

sils are “fabulous and a bit confusing,” says New York University’s Susan Anton via email. “There are some things in this that just don’t look like early *Homo*,” or at least the fossils of early *Homo* from east Africa. “The material is spectacular,” says the University of Pittsburgh’s [sic] Jeffrey Schwartz....” But “the interpretation of it ... is doubtful.” **He points out varying skull shapes, among other features**, among the *Naledi* specimens and argues the *Homo* family is so poorly defined that it’s not clear *Naledi* fits into it (Watson, emp. added).

Apparently the find isn’t as clear as it is being portrayed. *Nature* quoted Schwartz as well: “However, Jeffrey Schwartz, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania, thinks that the material is too varied to represent a single species. ‘I could show those images to my students and they would say that they’re not the same,’ he says. One of the skulls looks more like it comes from an australopithecine, he says, as do certain features of the femurs” (Callaway). Apparently, Schwartz agrees with my first take on the evidence: there’s more than one species represented by the fossils. *Fox News* admitted that “[n]ot everybody agreed that the discovery revealed a new species. Tim White of the University of California, Berkeley [who is most known for his work on the famous “Lucy” fossils—JM], told *The Associated Press* the claim is questionable. ‘From what is presented here, (the fossils) belong to a primitive *Homo erectus*, a species named in the 1800s,’ he said” (Tilsley, parenthetical statement in orig.). *New Scientist* included its disclaimers as well:

Inevitably, though, there are dissenting views. “To me, having studied virtually the entire human fossil record, the specimens lumped together as *Homo naledi* represent two cranial morphs,” says Jeffrey Schwartz at the University of Pittsburgh in Philadelphia. Ian Tattersall at the American Museum of Natural History in New York shares that view. Last month, he and Schwartz wrote an article calling for researchers to think carefully about classifying new fossils as belonging to *Homo*. As for the *Dinaledi* finds,

Schwartz and Tattersall point out that although the foreheads of some of the new skulls are gently sloped, one skull has a taller forehead with a distinct brow ridge—suggesting two species are present. “Putting these fossils in the genus *Homo* adds to the lack of clarity in trying to sort out human evolution,” says Schwartz (Barras).

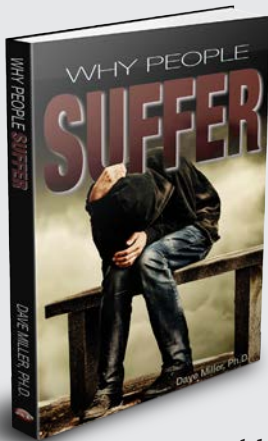
Bottom line: the evolutionary community must continue its search for conclusive evidence of its claims that we evolved from an ape-like creature. On a positive note, it is refreshing that Lee Berger, unlike the bulk of the paleoanthropological community, is insistent about not hoarding his fossil finds where few can examine them to see the evidence for themselves. Noting the change in practice that Berger is creating in the community by being so open, paleoanthropologist of the University of Kent in Canterbury, UK, Tracy Kivell, said, “There’s lots of fossils out there no one has ever seen, except for a few select people. Palaeoanthropology is really rotten that way” (Callaway). Is it possible that if the paleoanthropological community was more forthcoming with their alleged evidences for evolution, more scientists would be able to assess the evidence and more quickly discover flaws in claims being made? In so doing, would they not highlight for the world, before the world forgets the previous flawed claims, **how unsupported by solid evidence the theory of evolution truly is?**

REFERENCES

- Barras, Colin (2015), “New Species of Extinct Human Found in Cave May Rewrite History,” *NewScientist.com*, September 10, <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22730383-700-new-species-extinct-human-found-in-cave-may-rewrite-history/>.
- Callaway, Ewen (2015), “Crowdsourcing Digs Up an Early Human Species,” *Nature.com*, September 10, <http://www.nature.com/news/crowdsourcing-digs-up-an-early-human-species-1.18305>.
- Gibbons, Ann (2015), “New Human Species Discovered,” *Science*, 349[6253]:1149-1150, September 11.
- Houts, Michael G. (2015), “Assumptions and the Age of the Earth,” *Reason & Revelation*, 35[3]:26-34, March, <http://apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=1185>.
- Miller, Jeff (2012a), “*Australopithecus Sediba*: Evolutionary Game Changer?” *Reason & Revelation*, 32[3]:33-35, March, <http://www.apologeticspress.org/APPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=1024&article=1741#>.
- Miller, Jeff (2012b), “Sediba Hype Continues,” *Reason & Revelation*, 32[9]:92-93, September, <http://apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=1093&article=2039>.
- Miller, Jeff (2013), “Don’t Assume Too Much: Not All Assumptions in Science Are Bad,” *Reason & Revelation*, 33[6]:62-70, June, <http://apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=1122>.
- Miller, Jeff (2015a), “Big Bang Inflation Officially Bites the Dust,” *Reason & Revelation*, 35[6]:62-65, June, <http://apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=1195&article=2516>.
- Miller, Jeff (2015b), “Hobbit Man: Another Blunder...And an Insult,” *Reason & Revelation*, 35[4]:46-47, April, <http://apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=1188&article=2503>.
- Miller, Jeff (2015c), “Sediba: Yet Another Paleo-Blunder,” *Reason & Revelation*, 35[6]:66, June, <http://apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=1195&article=2516>.
- Shreeve, Jamie (2015), “This Face Changes the Human Story. But How?” *National Geographic.com*, September 10, <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/09/150910-human-evolution-change/>.
- Tilsley, Paul (2015), “Mass Grave of New Human Relative Discovered in South Africa, Claim Scientists,” *FoxNews.com*, September 10, <http://www.foxnews.com/science/2015/09/10/mass-grave-new-human-relative-discovered-in-south-africa-claim-scientists/?intcmp=hpbtl>.
- Watson, Traci (2015), “Ancient Fossils in African Cave are Tantalizing Glimpse of Early Man,” *USAToday.com*, September 10, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2015/09/10/fossils-humans-cave-ancient-bones/71966570/?hootPostID=69a85859aa6fa7ba18f77917410b6df1>.



NOTE FROM

The Editor*Great Gift Ideas*

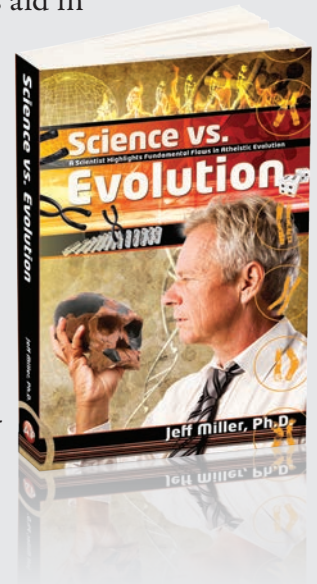
We are entering the time of year when Americans turn their thoughts to family gatherings—a time which includes purchasing gifts for friends and family. With over 35 years of creating outstanding materials to nurture and bolster the human spirit, Apologetics Press can provide you with a host of beneficial products and materials. And these products, by definition, are designed to be of far greater value than those gifts that merely gratify the flesh. Our materials aid in preparing the soul for the home of the soul where we will reside far longer than our temporary earthly sojourn.

We have products for all ages—from infants to adults. Now would be a good time for you to visit our Web site and examine both our on-line catalog as well as our Web store. If you will click on the words “Product Catalog” in the left hand column of our Web site, you will be treated to a state-of-the-art electronic 48-page catalog that enables you to flip the pages. If you click on “Store” in the same left hand column, you will be taken to our Web store where you can order products on-line and have them shipped to you in an expeditious manner.



This month's centerspread spotlights some of our most recent products. Please give serious consideration to assisting your loved ones with the development of their souls by giving them gifts from A.P.

Dave Miller



See the Center Spread
for More Details